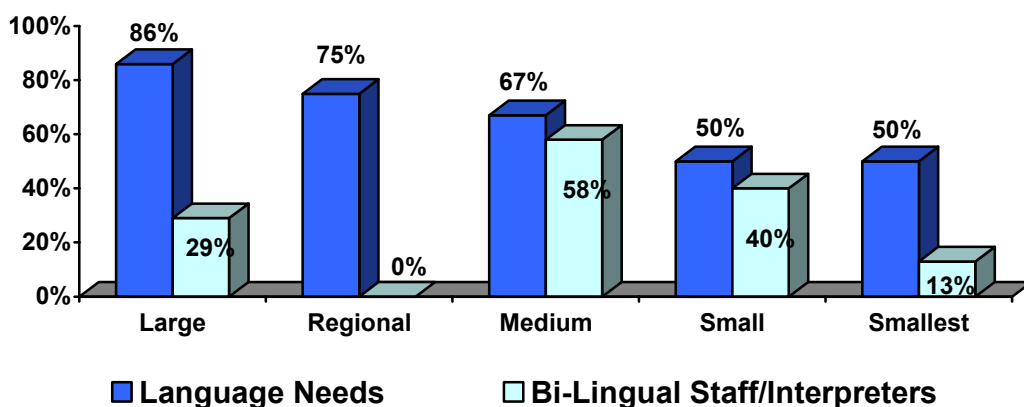


Interpreter Services. As already mentioned, 29 (64 percent) of the total action plans cited language as a barrier for self-represented litigants. Fourteen (48 percent) of those 29 proposals included plans to make staff available to provide services in more than one language. All of the counties proposed the use of translated self-help materials. Fifteen (52 percent) of these counties have chosen to rely exclusively on such translated materials. The regional plans, for example, rely exclusively on translated materials.

Language Needs and Interpreters



The small and medium-sized counties were more likely to propose bilingual staff or interpreters to address the language issue. Seven out of the eight medium sized counties citing language access as a serious issue made such proposals. Two of the largest county plans proposed the use of bilingual staff or interpreters, while six proposed relying on translated self-help materials.

C. Community Partnerships

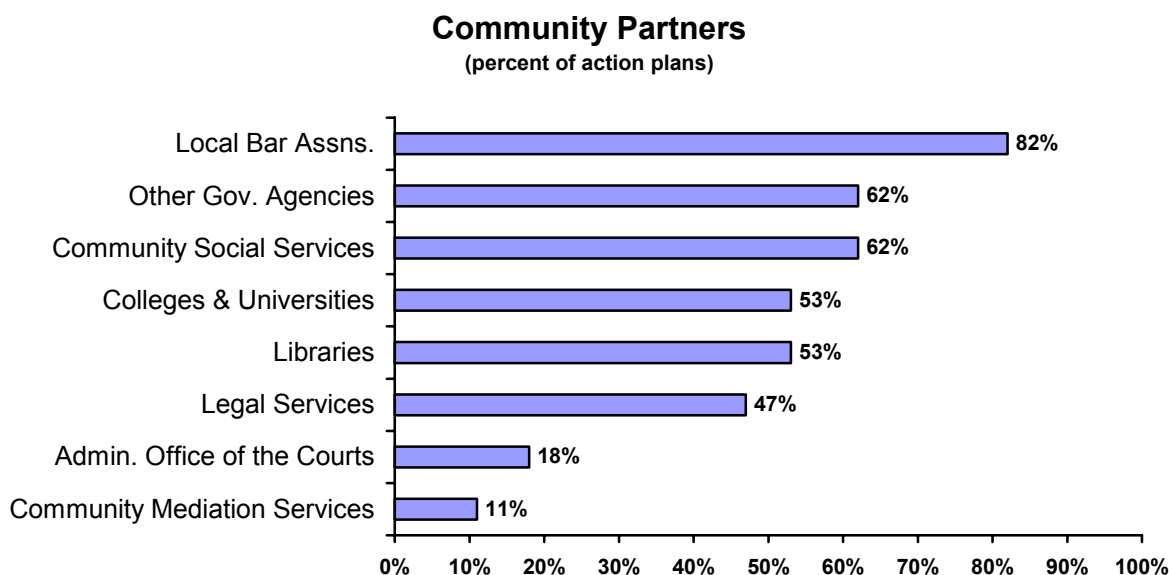
Partnerships between the court and other community service providers were pivotal to the development of these action plans. All the plans included multiple partners from both government and community in their planning process.

Other government agencies that were included were victim-witness programs, the Department of Child Support Services, district attorneys, public defenders, the Department of Social Services, boards of education, public health agencies, law enforcement agencies, a state hospital, departments of probation, and child care councils.

Examples of community social services and other community organizations that were included were churches, domestic violence services, chambers of commerce, the Rotary, Elks Clubs, Moose Lodges, vocational schools, neighborhood resource centers, senior citizen centers, parenting

programs, drug and alcohol programs, childcare centers, fair housing agencies, YWCA, fathers' support groups, the United Way, disability services, newspapers, and the Salvation Army.

College and university partners included both undergraduate programs and law schools. There were also several counties working with paralegal schools.



A few plans mentioned working with the California Administrative Office of the Courts as well as with the National Center for State Courts and courts from other counties.

The community participation in the planning process of the courts is noteworthy. Of the 45 courts that provided action plans, 35 had previously developed detailed community-focused strategic plans for their courts in which providing access to justice for self-represented litigants was cited as a high priority. Of the remaining ten courts, four included self-help centers with staff in their overall strategic plans, and four more included non-staffed self-help centers.

Collaboration with other government and community-based organizations has been central to most of the action plans. The first task in the Los Angeles County court's action plan, for example, was to coordinate the community-based services for self-represented litigants that were already operating at or around their numerous court locations.

Several of the partnerships that courts are crafting with schools, universities, and community centers involve translation of written instructions into several different languages. Some of the same organizations are serving as outposts for the courts where technological assistance (kiosks, etc.) can be located. Plans to use court staff or experts from local bar associations to train individuals in these locations frequently accompanies such proposals.

One of the main subjects of partnerships with local bar associations is limited-scope, or unbundled, legal representation. Bench/bar discussions about the realistic use of unbundling and the necessary

changes in local rules are frequently mentioned. Bench-bar groups are also reviewing local rules on other matters and working together to develop more pro bono services for the public. There are also proposals that include partnerships between the court and legal services to provide legal information and assistance to self-represented litigants.

In addition, partnerships with local newspapers and television and radio stations are mentioned as techniques to get general information about the court and news of available services out to the community.

Conclusion

To date, the courts in 52 of California's 58 counties have participated in the action planning for self-represented litigants. These 52 counties contain 98 percent of California's population of approximately 34 million people. Forty-five of the counties have already provided action plans; 7 are still in the planning process.

While the development of public access legal information and education through the creation of self-help centers remained the centerpiece of most local action plans, 71 percent moved beyond this first step to proposals for system changes designed to facilitate management of self-represented litigant cases.

DIRECT SERVICES TO SELF-REPRESENTED LITIGANTS

Approximately 93 percent of these action plans are structured around staffed self-help centers under the supervision of attorneys. Support staff included paralegals, court clerks, law students and other community volunteers. Over 80 percent planned to expand the role of their family law facilitator to all aspects of family law and/or to other civil matters. In both litigant and judicial surveys where services were rated according to usefulness, staff available to answer questions ranked first in importance. Access to staff is frequently supported by the proposed use of telephone help lines, videoconferencing, fax and e-mail, and the use of self-help assistance vans.

Self-help-only types of technology such as written forms with instructions, interactive online forms programs, Web site information, kiosks, and telephone trees are frequently proposed. In some plans, these tools are used in outpost locations away from the court and are intended to be used by self-represented litigants without staff to answer questions. In others, technology is part of a more comprehensive plan in which these tools are used to augment and support the work of the self-represented litigants assistance staff.

SYSTEMS CHANGES

Reviews of local rules and forms, case management systems, and calendaring strategies were proposed. Some plans proposed the use of staff resources, particularly attorneys, in courtrooms to conduct settlement negotiations, answer procedural questions, and prepare written orders and judgments. Others proposed using attorney staff to review files prior to hearings and determine